

2013 Maryland FMP Report (July 2014)

Section 5. Black Drum (*Pogonias cromis*)

Chesapeake Bay FMP

A new Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for black drum¹ was approved in 2013 by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC).² The FMP was initiated because of increased recreational and commercial harvest, inconsistent coastwide regulations, the unknown condition of the stock and concerns about harvesting immature and breeding black drum. The 2012 ASMFC Action Plan, a guiding document, included tasks to “to support monitoring and other data collection, to improve information available for assessments of spot, kingfish and black drum” and to add members as needed to represent black drum fishery interests to the South Atlantic Species Advisory Panel.

Prior to the new Interstate ASMFC plan, the Chesapeake Bay Fishery Management Plan (CBFMP) for black drum was the only regional FMP for black drum on the Atlantic Coast. It was adopted in 1993 to address concerns about potential overfishing. Maryland’s Fisheries Service conducted a review of the 1993 Chesapeake Bay Fishery Management Plan (CBFMP) for Black Drum in 2010 and determined that the plan is still an appropriate framework for managing the black drum stock.

Stock Status

It is unknown if the stock is overfished or if overfishing is occurring.² There is no formal stock assessment of black drum from the Chesapeake Bay or the Atlantic Coast but a benchmark stock assessment, initiated in 2012, is scheduled for completion in 2015. Tagging data suggest there is one Atlantic coastal stock. Maryland has some biological data from 1995 to 1998, when watermen were paid for samples. Since then, there has been no directed collection of data. Virginia indicated in 2005 that black drum did not appear to be overfished but they cautioned that “many unknowns surround the stock and its harvest.” A Florida stock assessment in 1995 suggested that stocks could sustain harvest at the time. Some biological information is available from the Gulf of Mexico black drum but evidence suggests that this is a separate stock.

Current Management Measures

Maryland closed its Chesapeake Bay commercial black drum fishery in 1999, but retains a limited coastal commercial fishery with a 1500 pound annual limit. Virginia manages its commercial fishery through limited entry and a total allowable catch of 120,000 pounds. Both states have a 16 inch minimum size limit with a commercial catch report requirement. Virginia established a management zone in the southeast portion of the Chesapeake Bay for black drum, further restricting some commercial

gear. The current fishery is mainly recreational and both states limit recreational harvest to one fish over 16”.

Issues/Concerns

Age-growth studies by Old Dominion University showed an average age of 34 years and a maximum age of 64 years in the Chesapeake Bay. Long-lived species make stock assessments difficult to conduct. Lacking a formal stock assessment, management of the species by Chesapeake Bay states and the PRFC is precautionary.

There are occasional requests from the Maryland commercial fishery to consider re-opening the commercial harvest of black drum in Chesapeake Bay. In addition, the 16” minimum size limit does not protect all immature black drum. Females generally reach maturity at 4 to 6 years of age and at a size over 21”.

Delaware and New Jersey have discussed the development of a joint DE-NJ black drum FMP as well as an increase in the minimum size limit to 32”, but the minimum size limit remains 16” with a creel limit of three in both states. There is concern that the fisheries along the coast target juvenile black drum and that the coastal fisheries have expanded.

The Fisheries

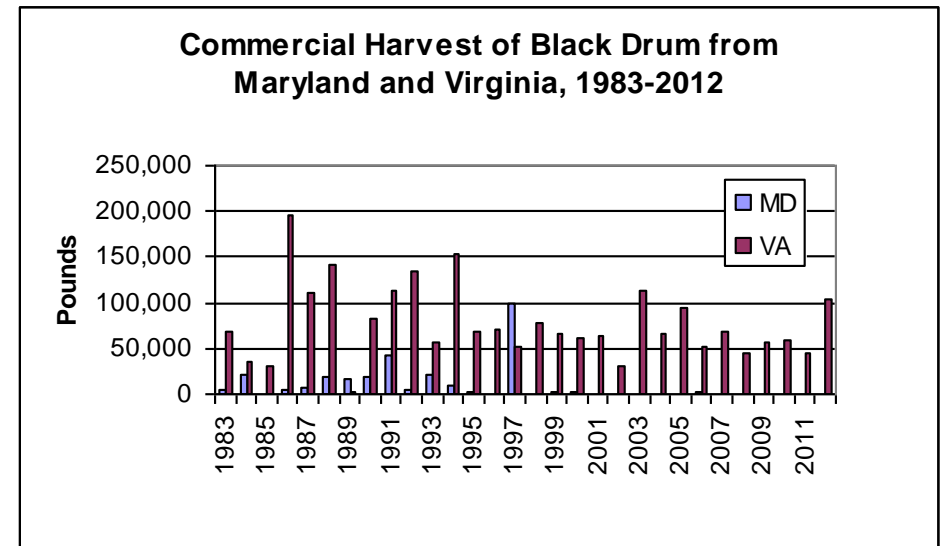


Figure 1. Reported commercial harvest of black drum from Maryland and Virginia from 1983 through 2012.³

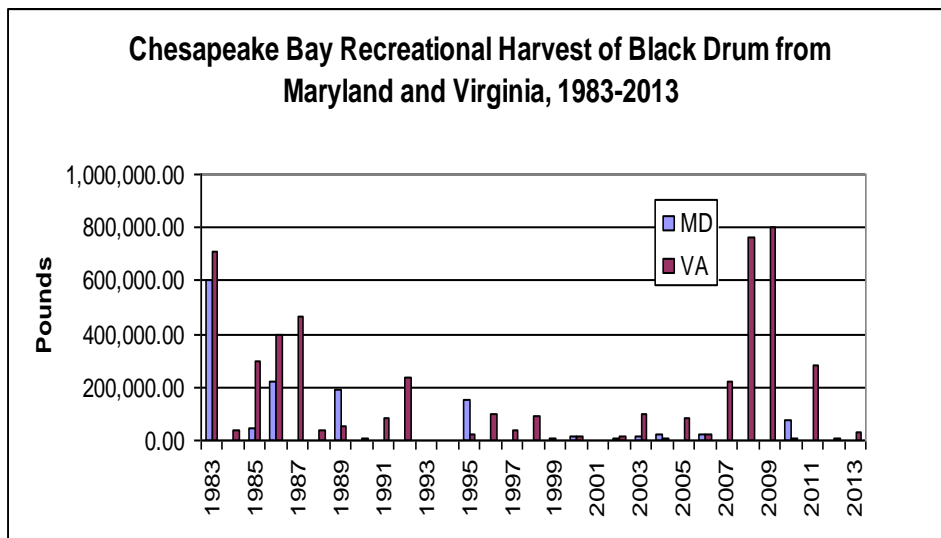


Figure 2. Recreational Harvest Estimate (MRIP) of Black Drum from Chesapeake Bay by Maryland and Virginia from 1983 through 2013.⁴

References

- ¹ Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, June 2013. **Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Black Drum**
- ² 2013 Annual Report of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, February 2014.
- ³ Personal communication from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division. May 28, 2014. <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/commercial/>.
- ⁴ Personal communication from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics Division. May 28, 2014. <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/recreational/index.html>.
- ⁵ Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. 2013. Research Priorities and Recommendations to Support Interjurisdictional Fisheries Management. Special Report #89, ASMFC, Arlington, VA. 58pp.

1993 Chesapeake Bay Program Black Drum Implementation (updated 7/14)

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1993 Chesapeake Bay Program Black Drum Implementation (updated 7/14)

Problem Area	Action	Date	Comments
	2d MD and PFRC will assess the need for commercial black drum harvest restrictions as data becomes available	1994 Continue	MD- Beginning in 1999, the commercial catch of black drum from the coastal bays and tributaries, and the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries is prohibited except for scientific investigation. Total allowable landings from the Atlantic Ocean are 1,500 pounds.
3. Gear Conflicts	3. VA has established a Special Black Drum Management Zone, for “high use” areas such as the Cabbage Patch and Latimer Shoals. During May 1 through June 7, no gill net or trot line may be in established zone from 7:00 AM to 8:30 PM.	1992; Continue	Established to address commercial and recreational area and time conflicts
4. Habitat Issues	4.1-7 Bay jurisdictions will continue to set water quality goals and review management programs under the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement	Continue	The Chesapeake 2000 Agreement renewed the commitment to improve water quality and habitat for living resources. The 2009 President’s Executive Order provided additional water quality and habitat goals for living resources. The Chesapeake Bay Program developed a new Watershed Agreement with habitat and fisheries outcomes (scheduled for adoption, June 2014). Juvenile black drum utilize shallow water. Black drum feed on crabs, oysters, mussels and clams within the Bay. They have been collected in seine and trawl surveys of the Coastal Bays.

Acronyms

ASMFC – Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

COMAR – Code of Maryland Regulations

MRIP – Marine Recreational Information Program

ODU – Old Dominion University